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A C O M E D I E T T A ,

In One Act.

By Jacques de Bizy

CORRECTLY PRINTED FROM THE PROMPTER'S COPY, WITH THE CAST OF
CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, RELATIVE
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JULIET'S LOVE LETTER.

—:O:—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JULIET, *A Young Lady.*
A FEMALE VOICE.

COSTUMES. — MODERN.

PROPERTIES.

A toilette-table. A chair. A table with various articles of dress strewed over it, satin slippers, gloves, &c. Some articles lying on the floor. Lighted candle. Another unlighted. Lock to door L., and key to use. Candies in paper. Pocket tablet. Small note to fit in tablet.

EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R., means first entrance right, and right. L., first entrance left, and left. S.E.R., second entrance right. S.E.L., second entrance left. T.E.R., third entrance right. T.E.L., third entrance left. F.E.R., fourth entrance right. F.E.L., fourth entrance left. U.E.R., upper entrance right. U.E.L., upper entrance left. R.F., right flat, L.F., left flat. R.C., right of centre. L.C., left of centre. C., centre. C.D., centre doors. C.R., centre towards right. C.L., centre towards left. Observing you are supposed to face the audience.

JULIET'S LOVE LETTER.

SCENE.—*A Dressing-Room in disorder. Doors B. and L. A toilette-table. A chair. A table on which are strewn various articles of dress—some have fallen to the floor—satin slippers, gloves, etc.*

Enter JULIET, L. door, with a candle in her hand, speaking to some one behind the scenes.

Juliet. Breakfast at eleven o'clock, remember! Good night, auntie, good night! Tell the girl, please, not to bring me my chocolate—good night. (*Kisses her hand, puts candle on table, and then locks the door.*) There! Now I feel easier; with my door locked like this, I'm not afraid of robbers. If I hadn't such a substantial lock to my door, I shouldn't sleep a wink. (*Lights another candle.*) I'm awfully afraid in the dark. The papers have been so full of horrible crimes. If anyone came to murder me, how I should scream! For what could I do against such a great wicked man as a murderer is? For a murderer must be big, very big—enormous! How brave I'm getting all at once. When my doors are so securely locked, I can easily understand the coolness with which men face the dangers of the battle-field. (*Hears steps outside door, L., and shows fear. Noise becomes louder. She runs to the door, and holds lock with both hands.*) Some one is there! Oh, who can it be? And my uncle sleeps at the other end of the house! What will become of me? Well, and what has become of all my courage? (*Noise becomes very great; a drawer is heard to fall.*) Oh, it's a robber! I don't dare to stir! I'll scream! (*Tries to scream, but her voice fails her.*)

Voice. (Outside door L.) Good night, Juliet. Don't be afraid! I came to look for your uncle's portfolio, which he left in the drawing-room.

Juliet. (With trembling voice.) Oh, is that you, dear auntie? You didn't frighten me at all. *(Noise ceases.)* What a fool I am! Where in the world did my head go? Of course it couldn't have been any one but auntie—and just now I was talking in such a grand style about going to war! Papa is always laughing about my love for the military. I do love the soldiers, for they are so unfortunate; always on horseback, always exposed to danger, and they are so brave! Ah, what a glorious thing courage is—in other people—and how lovely their medals are! If I had a brother, I'd like him to be a splendid officer, just like papa. Only, as he couldn't begin by being a colonel, I should forbid his poking about in the kitchen, as the common soldiers are always doing. I never could understand that mania! When I asked papa why his orderlies would stay for hours with the cook, he laughed like everything; but, after all, it's not surprising, for those poor fellows are so badly fed—always soup and beef—and heaven knows what kind of soup, and what kind of beef. I expect it's even worse than what we used to get at school. *(Laughs.)* They've jolly good reason for getting into the good graces of the cooks. Ha, ha, ha! *(Sits.)* How nice it is to sit down when you've danced from eleven till three o'clock! I danced too much! You see, I danced for all the girls that had no partners! That poor little Margaret didn't look very much pleased with me! She only danced twice, and that was with her brother! *(Puts her hand in her pocket, and takes it out quickly.)* Good gracious, all the sugarplums that I saved for my little brother have melted in the bottom of my pocket! *(Pulling out her pocket-handkerchief to wipe her fingers, her tablet is dragged out with it and falls to the floor.)* Oh, dear! My tablet! *(Picks it up.)* It is a little book. In here are inscribed all your worldly advantages, young gentlemen. Whether your eyes are beautiful, your hands well shaped, your teeth white—whether you are well dressed, graceful, dance well. There will certainly be a remark in the tablet for you. If a good one, so much the better; but if uncomplimentary, then beware of asking for a second dance, for you will be refused. No young girl cares to have anything to do with a man who is inscribed in this way: "Stupid, dances like a grasshopper, does not keep time, and treads on his partner's feet." Ah, you think, gentlemen, that our tablets are only an aid to memory, and that all we have to do when the ball is over, is to pass a sponge or the damp corner of our handkerchiefs over it—and that's the end of it. *(Looks over tablet.)* Here's a name now—Gaston. I danced three times with him. Gaston—I will call him Gas for short. How many waltzes and polkas we did dance together! He's a splendid dancer! How tall he is now! Upon my word, he looks like a man! I remember what fun we used to have when I was eight and he was ten. What races we used to run in the big park at Chestnut Hill.

In the evening when it got dark, we didn't dare to stir out of the house; we were so afraid of the old oak trees, filled with goblins. The rustle of the leaves frightened us almost to death, and we imagined we heard the voices of ghosts that they told us lived at the bottom of wells. Now he's a handsome young man, and I should feel so proud if he should want me to be his wife. I wonder what he is doing at this moment! Sleeping, I suppose, for he danced so hard! (*With disappointed tone.*) Yes, he's asleep, no doubt, and probably not thinking of me. It's too bad, when I'm so often thinking of him. (*Opening tablet.*) Good-by, Gas, my old play-fellow, good-by! I used to kiss you in the old times—and he used to kiss me, too; but I don't dare to now, for mamma says it's not proper to kiss young men. But sometimes, in spite of that, I do so long to; and if I were sure of not being scolded, I'd give you a good hug, just as I used to. (*Raises tablet toward her lips.*) No, no, I mustn't, mamma would not like it. But I'm not doing any harm, and the tablet can't speak and won't tell any one. There! (*Kisses his name with the fervor of a child—as she shuts the tablet, a piece of folded paper drops out.*) Oh, what's that? (*Picks up paper.*) Where could it have come from? Out of the tablet? Who could have put it there? (*Examines it attentively.*) It looks like a love-letter. How strange! I did not lend my tablet to any one except Gas, who wanted to write his name down for all my disengaged dances. That's it. (*She is going to open it.*) But if I should find something that I ought not to read in this paper, I should be nicely punished for my curiosity. Who knows, there may be some secret or other in it. It's very wicked to try and find out a secret. But I must this one! It's never too late to begin! (*Opens paper.*) Why, the handwriting is just like mine—exactly as if I had written it myself! Let's look at the signature. Gaston! Eh? (*With dignity; then correcting herself.*) I wonder what dear old Gas wants of me. (*Reading.*) "Juliet"—(*Speaking.*)—that sounds like old times; let's see how it goes on. (*Reading.*) "Forgive me my audacity in daring to love you, and to tell you of it." (*Speaking.*) It's a joke! (*Reading.*) "My love for you has weighed upon me for a long time, and it's concealment makes me most unhappy. Open your fresh, pure heart to me, that you may give me that happiness on which my existence depends!" (*Speaking.*) This is getting serious! Take care, Mr. Gaston! (*Reading.*) "Can you have forgotten those hours of our childhood when you called me your husband, and I called you my wife! A dream of our childhood, which it is for you to realise. I am grown up now." (*Speaking.*) Oh, yes, grown up; that's your opinion, you little coxcomb! (*Reading.*) "Almost a man." (*Speaking.*) Pooh, pooh, pooh! (*Reading.*) "And it is the man asks you to gratify the wish of the child." (*Speaking.*) Well, this is cool! To make me a declaration of love without any warning. Why, he's crazy! (*Reading.*) "You needn't search for the medallion that you lost the other day at Mrs. Varselle's, for I have found it and have hidden it in my

heart. From that moment I have never ceased to kiss it as I would like to kiss you." (*Speaking with constantly increasing anger.*) Oh, don't trouble yourself any more, sir! Not content with worrying me by hiding mamma's medallion which I thought was lost, and I cried about it for an hour, you must needs want to kiss me; but it's forbidden. (*Goes on reading.*) "Alas, we are not allowed to kiss each other now; and yet, if I only dared, you would perhaps let me take your head in my two hands and kiss your forehead, as I did when we were children." (*Speaking.*) Oh, yes, certainly! and to punish you, I'll tell mamma. Wouldn't that vex him? Wouldn't that make him feel little? (*Goes on reading.*) "I love you, Juliet; I worship you, and I will await my sentence on my knees." (*Crushes letter in her hand, and then throws it down.*) This is too much! To dare to write such a thing to me! (*Bursts into tears.*) How mamma will scold me when I tell her about it, and the thought of papa's rage alone makes me tremble all over. Oh, dear! Why didn't he tell me that he loved me, instead of writing all this rubbish. Then, at least, I shouldn't have been obliged to listen; I could have made him hold his tongue; I could have showed him how wicked it was to take advantage of my weakness! (*Stops crying—a sarcastic mood succeeding her fright.*) My friends all warned me that boys were all alike at his age. They are hardly out of school, when, like a flash, they are in love! Well, what is being in love, I wonder! I don't know! (*With artlessness.*) If the little nunny had only explained to me; but no, nothing but impertinence! I love you, I love you, that's all! Very well, what then? To get married it's only necessary to say to one, "I love you!" It seems to be very easy to marry! Then why are there so many old maids? No, no, there must be something else that I don't know of, nor you either, Gas. Moreover, Mr. Gaston, I'd have you to know for your edification, that I have been honored by a much more experienced man than you are—an old general, who is much more versed in marriages than you are. He must have reflected long and deeply before asking for my hand, and not rushed at it in a giddy-pated way as you did. (*Increasing crying.*) You are too young, my dear child, and I shall be under the necessity of finishing your education, for I am sixteen, and you are eighteen. Now, as you know, a girl of my age is in fact a woman, while you are only a small boy. So much the worse for you, my dear; you would have had a better chance of success if you had been born ten years sooner, because, as you may well suppose, I shall not serve my apprenticeship to you, who know nothing about marrying, and whose ignorance is only equaled by my own. All my schoolmates, who have married since they left school, have told me, "No one marries for love now-a-days, my dear Juliet;" and they would not say that without knowing. Come now, Gas, confess that you have been thoughtless; but in spite of that, if you promise to give me back my medallion, I will forget your fault, and not tell any one, not even my nurse. (*Becoming sentimental.*) Not only that, but I begin to think that I

was wrong to get so angry with you, and something tells me that your audacious conduct was the result of good feeling. You really must love me a little to have braved the consequences of such a daring act, as you did. Why, your very boldness is almost attractive to me now, and I can imagine you ready to face a thousand dangers to prove your love for me. But you'll give me back that locket, won't you? If it hadn't been for you, I should have lost mamma's locket, and how I should have been scolded! (*Wipes her eyes.*) Good gracious, a tear! It's for joy, because you say that you have not forgotten little Juliet, whom you seemed to love long ago. Come, I'm very sorry for my anger just now! I wanted to be an important person with wounded feelings, and crushing dignity, but I see how unsuccessful I have been in trying to deceive myself. This tear is a proof that I am the first one punished for my absurdity. (*Taking the shut tablet from the table, and opening it.*) If you had only seen me a moment ago, kissing your name on this ivory leaf, you would have known that our two hearts were sisters! Oh, how sweet is the thought of your letter! It even seems to me like the expression of a feeling that I have preserved since our childhood. (*Picks up note.*) Look at me, Gaston, dear Gaston; I wish to make reparation for my silly anger, by a big kiss. (*Kisses note.*)

Voice. (*Outside.*) Why, Juliet, haven't you gone to bed yet? Your light still burning?

Juliet. (*Aside.*) My aunt! (*Aloud.*) Yes, yes, dear aunt, yes, I'm asleep! (*Tries to blow out the light, but in her eagerness knocks over candle—Aside.*) Good gracious, what a noise!

Voice. What in the world are you doing to make such a noise in bed?

Juliet. Oh, nothing, because I was asleep.

Voice. Your sleep is of a very noisy kind. (*Laughs.*)

Juliet. (*Running towards bed-room door, R., and looking at note, which she holds in her hand.*) You are the cause of all this, you miserable little wretch of a piece of paper from a boy of eighteen!

(*Exits R.*)

CURTAIN.

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